

Congress has an impressive record of honoring our veterans and our troops. Since taking control of Congress, we have provided real support for our veterans by passing the largest veterans funding increase in history.

But don't take my word for it, listen to what veterans organizations are saying about our historic veterans funding bills. The American Legion called it "an impressive commitment to this Nation's servicemembers, veterans and their families."

The Veterans of Foreign Wars said: "The record funding level acknowledges the deep debt this Nation owes to its defenders and that the care and services provided to them is the ongoing cost of war."

The AMVETS wrote: "Overall, AMVETS believe these funding levels will ensure VA will be able to serve America's veterans and their families with dignity and compassion."

Madam Speaker, for most of the year President Bush opposed the investment in America's veterans. This legislation simply would not have been possible without a Democratic Congress and their commitment to our veterans.

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REMOVE THE EARMARKS FROM THE DEFENSE BILL

(Mr. FLAKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. FLAKE. Madam Speaker, the day after the House passed the Labor-HHS spending bill containing more than 2,000 earmarks, we got a look at the Defense bill. What we're finding is troubling to say the least.

Again, there are more than 2,000 earmarks in this bill, a bill that is intended for the military. Now, we all know that earmarks draw funds away from more urgent priorities. Nowhere is this more clear than with the military spending bill. Simply put, every dollar that Congress has earmarked in the Defense bill is a dollar that troops won't have for critical equipment.

What's so important that it diverts money away from soldiers? Well, air-dropped into this conference report and this Defense appropriation bill, \$3 million for a golf program for kids. This earmark might be par for the course in any other bill, but in the Defense bill, it's clearly indefensible.

I don't believe that earmarks like this represent the sentiments of the country when it comes to military spending, and I urge my colleagues to reject the bill until the earmarks are removed.

HONORING FILIPINO VETERANS

(Ms. BORDALLO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BORDALLO. Madam Speaker, in honor of Veterans Day I rise to recognize a special group of veterans whose

story and service this Congress must honor.

During World War II, thousands of Filipino soldiers were inducted into the United States Armed Forces by President Roosevelt following the invasion of their country by Imperial Japanese Forces. These Filipino soldiers fought valiantly with us in the name of freedom. They were to be entitled to full veterans benefits, but such promises were reneged by Congress with the passage of the 1946 Rescission Act.

Ironically, the very democracy that these veterans fought to defend was used to take away the recognition of their service. We have a duty to fulfill what President Truman called a "moral obligation" to take care of these veterans.

There are 18,000 still with us today. Let us make this right. Support the Filipino Veterans Equity Act.

VOTER REGISTRATION

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, several States held elections this week, and now the 2008 Presidential elections are just 1 year away. This is a good time to reflect on the importance of voting and the integrity of our election process.

The right to vote is one of the most important freedoms granted to citizens in the United States. It's a right and a privilege that should not be taken lightly.

Our voter registration process needs to be reformed in order to ensure that only American citizens are eligible to vote. It is alarming that eight of the 9/11 hijackers were registered to vote.

The sanctity of the ballot box must be paramount. If we can't ensure the integrity of our elections, our representative form of government breaks down.

When a person gets a driver's license, they can check a box to register to vote, and there's no guarantee that the person's eligibility to vote will be verified. There are House seats that have been decided by just a few votes per precinct. The American people deserve to know that elections will be won and lost by legal, rightfully registered voters.

HONORING VETERANS DAY

(Mr. FARR asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor, as many of us have today, the Veterans Day this weekend that's coming up.

Congress has spent a lot of time this week talking about veterans. We've talked about how this Congress provided the largest increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration. We've debated which side cares

more about veterans and who's to blame for the delay.

I think the American people can see who really is holding up the latest VA appropriations bill, but I'm here to remind each and every Member of Congress that, as you go home this weekend and speak to veterans and their families in their district, to honor them, ask yourself what have you done to honor your pledge to our veterans and their loved ones?

I hope the President also takes a hard look in the mirror before he decides on how he intends to honor veterans on Veterans Day.

We have to remember that in honoring our country's veterans that you cannot honor a veteran without honoring their families. They don't come alone. They have parents. They have loved ones. They have children.

And the bill that takes care of that is the bill that we're voting on today, which is the Labor-HHS appropriations bill. In order to support veterans, you've got to support their family. Be family friendly, vote for the appropriations bill.

IN RECOGNITION OF BRIAN EISELE

(Mr. WILSON of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I rise today to bid a fond farewell to a member of my staff, Brian Eisele. Brian will be leaving our office to join the staff of South Carolina Senator JIM DEMINT. Although I will miss his presence, I am confident Brian will be a tremendous addition to Senator DEMINT's staff.

Brian came to the Hill earlier this year as an intern for Congressman BILL SHUSTER of Pennsylvania. His hard work, professionalism, thoughtfulness and personal integrity have been an enormous asset to the people of the 2nd District of South Carolina. He will certainly be difficult to replace.

A graduate of the University of South Carolina, Brian is the son of David, an Iraq war veteran, and Denise Eisele of Aiken, South Carolina. South Carolina is proud of its native son, and I'm excited for Brian's success. I wish him all the best in the years to come.

Brian has a bright future as a capable and competent public servant, and I look forward to working with him in the future.

In conclusion, God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11th.

CELEBRATE VETERANS DAY

(Mr. ISRAEL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ISRAEL. Madam Speaker, there is bad news and good news this Veterans Day. The bad news is the study by Harvard Medical School that there

are 2 million veterans who don't have health insurance and are not eligible for veterans care, 2 million veterans. What makes it worse is that President Bush is banning 273,000 veterans from receiving VA care because they are not income eligible. So he is balancing the budget on the backs of middle-class and working veterans.

The good news is that this Democratic majority passed the largest increase in VA health care in the 77-year history of the VA. We are going to add 1,800 new claims processors to make the long lines a little shorter and the wait shorter as well.

Now, we have to go even further. I'm urging my colleagues to sign a letter that I've sent to the President demanding that he reverse the policy of denying health care to 273,000 veterans and not means-test them. We didn't means-test when we asked them to fight our battles. We should not means-test them when they have to come home for health care.

RECOGNIZING TEACHER EXCELLENCE

(Mr. REGULA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. REGULA. Madam Speaker, one of the most significant factors of a student's academic achievement and success in life is a teacher who inspires. It is my privilege to rise today to recognize two outstanding teachers from my district who have been honored for their exceptional service and dedication.

Just last month, Terra Mann was recognized among 4,000 nominations by the U.S. Department of Education as Ohio's recipient of "American Stars of Teaching." With 19 years of teaching at Worley School in Canton and hundreds of inspired students behind her, Terra's talent and commitment has propelled students forward. In 5 years, she has risen to the challenge and helped move a struggling school to one of the highest designations of success we measure as a Nation, particularly in the critical area of reading proficiency.

Julie Herman teaches at Compton Elementary in Canton, Ohio, and is the most recent recipient of the Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award, an award also known as the "Oscars of Teaching." She is an intervention specialist and engages young at-risk and disabled students to achieve remarkable success academically. In 2005-2006, she helped all of her third graders pass the Ohio Achievement Test.

Before our future entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders stands a teacher, and these women are examples of the truly best. I'm pleased to recognize and congratulate them here today.

FUNDING FOR VETERANS

(Mr. STUPAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, this country must keep its promises made to our servicemen and -women when they choose to serve our country by taking care of them when they return home as veterans. This Democratic Congress has been dedicated to making sure the needs of all America's veterans are fulfilled.

So far this year we've passed legislation providing the largest funding increase for veterans in the 77-year history of the VA. This funding will allow the VA to keep up with the growing number of veterans who need care, maintain its health care facilities, and treat veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan who are suffering from PTSD and traumatic brain injuries.

We also voted to increase military pay by 3.5 percent, as well as special pay and bonuses to combat troops, putting an additional \$7.3 billion in military paychecks. Unfortunately, the Bush administration is now renegeing on these enlistment bonuses to those severely wounded combat veterans.

Madam Speaker, this Democratic Congress has made meeting the needs of the veterans and our military a top priority. This weekend, and every day, let us all remember the service of our Nation's veterans and commit ourselves to keeping this country's promises to them.

INTRODUCTION OF TITLE X ABORTION PROVIDER PROHIBITION ACT

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, you know, there aren't many good things happening in federally funded family planning clinics nationwide, but should the largest abortion provider in America also be the largest recipient of Federal family planning funding under title X? I think not. This summer, 189 Republicans and Democrats agreed, supporting my amendment to prohibit tax dollars from funding Planned Parenthood.

Well, in that vein, today I'm introducing the Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act, a bill that would prohibit the distribution of title X family planning money to abortion providers here at home. There's simply no reason in the world why the taxpayer dollars of millions of pro-life Americans should be used to underwrite abortion providers in this country.

I urge my colleagues to join me as original cosponsors this week in support of the Title X Abortion Provider Prohibition Act.

IRAQ PRAYERS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, I rise today to give voice to many of my constituents who, as we approach the fifth Veterans Day since the Iraq war began, are as concerned as ever over our seemingly endless presence in that country and the ever-dimming prospects for peace. I've received a surge of prayers from my constituents regarding the war in recent weeks and would like to read two:

From Orange, Connecticut: "Loving God, inspire our leaders in Congress to release Your spirit of wisdom, courage and love and end the war, death and suffering in Iraq."

From Hamden, Connecticut: "I pray that the hearts and minds of those making decisions concerning the war in Iraq be opened to finding viable, peaceful alternatives to continuing the war. I pray that the withdrawal of troops commence immediately, and continue steadily over the shortest period possible, to bring them all home. I pray that the light of God will fall upon the country and Iraq and bring about peace in that place."

It is well past time to listen to these prayers, redeploy our troops and bring them safely home.

PASS THE U.S.-PERU FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

(Mr. WELLER of Illinois asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Madam Speaker, you know, trade and exports are important in States like Illinois, and particularly the district that I represent.

In Illinois, 17,000 businesses depend on exports for their survival. Forty percent of the corn soybeans and pork and beef and other livestock products are exported. One out of five manufacturing jobs is dependent on exports.

We have an opportunity today to expand trade. The 14 trade agreements this Congress has adopted in the last 12 years have created 16 million new jobs.

Today, we have before us the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement. What's nice about this agreement is it makes trade a two-way street. Right now, Peruvian products enter the United States duty free. Manufactured goods, agricultural products from Peru enter the United States without tariffs or duties, but it's not reciprocal. Caterpillar, for example, our biggest manufacturer in Illinois, their products face a 12 percent tariff.

What's good about the agreement we're going to vote for today is 80 percent of the tariffs on manufactured goods are gone on day one for U.S. products exported to Peru under this trade agreement.

It is good for Illinois workers, it's good for Illinois manufacturers, and I also note for Illinois farmers. Right now, they're at a disadvantage. It gives them the opportunity to be competitive. Let's have a bipartisan vote for U.S.-Peru.